

First and foremost, only after getting married by proper Vedic rituals, does a woman start to play the role of a mother in having children and caring for them. Secondly, a mother's role is not to deliver her dependants from the cycle of *samsāra* but to assist her husband whose duty is to deliver his children and dependants. Besides that, the author(s) perhaps forgot that they previously argued that, "being in a family relationship, his mother," was the reason why Sunīti could not become the *dīkṣā-guru* of Dhruva Mahārāja; but in this section, they argue that because a mother delivers her dependents, she should become *dīkṣā-guru*. The author(s) are blatantly contradicting a previous argument that they made; this is poor scholarship on their part. This latter argument of the author(s)' has already been shown, by quoting *śāstra*, to be invalid – a woman cannot become a *dīkṣā-guru*.

Hence, in concluding this section, we have demonstrated that there is nothing in *śāstra* that permits women to become *dīkṣā-gurus* and with ISKCON officially institutionalizing female *dīkṣā-gurus* it is the final nail in the coffin in terms of obstructing *varṇāśrama* implementation within ISKCON.

### **Equal rights Agenda -refuted**

This book that we are refuting is like the Bible for the feminist narrative in ISKCON and describing it as a *brahmāstra* against *varṇāśrama* wouldn't be an overstatement. The author(s)'s agenda, to slaughter Vedic culture and systematically influence the minds of ISKCON devotees with secular narratives, is obvious in the last fifty pages of their book. This is akin to how centuries ago, the British entered India to destroy Vedic culture and to rule her over. The author(s) utilize the very same technique, not wasting a single opportunity to completely eradicate whatever remains of the *varṇāśrama* system and Vedic culture within ISKCON. The last section of their book is the evidence that exhibits the author(s)' hatred for Vedic culture and the *varṇāśrama* system.

## Blatant mockery of *varṇāśrama* and Vedic culture

In this section, we will go through the feminist propaganda of the author(s) that starts on page 243 and spans close to 50 pages, which is over one-sixth of the total volume of their publication. In these pages, they paint a horrible picture of Vedic culture as a terrible barbaric culture that is oppressive to women. To state that the author(s) demonize Vedic culture as being anti-woman or gender-biased would be an understatement. They derive data from the writings of authors of western or non-Vedic origin with materialistic, atheistic, and abominable backgrounds and tie it all together with fragments of Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements from his lectures and conversations in order to build a narrative that Śrīla Prabhupāda was a feminist. Even a common man, let alone devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, would probably agree that the author(s)'s outlook in this section is not only pessimistic and toxic but also a blatant mockery of Lord Kṛṣṇa's *varṇāśrama* institution. There seems to be a clear display of hatred for the *varṇāśrama* institution on the part of the author(s) and a blatant attempt to push their agenda of women's liberation within ISKCON starting with women *dīkṣā-gurus*. It would be only apt to conclude that the author(s) have a whole operation, behind the scenes, that seeks to systematically introduce malicious practices of demoniac western ethos into ISKCON, much akin to the way the British attempted to destroy Vedic culture centuries ago.<sup>71</sup>

It is a total injustice to the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda that the author(s), in these fifty pages, totally misrepresent him by presenting the impression that Śrīla Prabhupāda was against the tenets of Vedic culture concerning the position of women in Vedic society. Any honest person who studies Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings will note numerous instances where Śrīla Prabhupāda presented the truth about Vedic culture as it is even if it were

71 The evidence for this is presented in an article located at <https://tinyurl.com/3awbmm2f>

non-palatable to his audience of the late 60s and early 70s. He knew the way to present it as it is and simultaneously encourage the hippies to take on the path of the Vedic lifestyle to become “happy(s).” Here are some examples (emphasis ours):

Actually, in the Western countries at least, we see that the woman class, they want equal rights with men. And there is. There is no distinction. **But it is my experience, the woman class, they are not happy in the Western countries. And still in our country, although we are so fallen, still our woman class remains satisfied.** Being predominated, they are happy. They are happy. That is my practical experience.

**So I do not wish to discuss this point very much but according to our Manu-saṁhitā, it is said that women should not be free.** Na svātantryam arhati: “Svātantryam is not allowed to the woman class.” Actually, we have seen, and by experience, those who are under the domination of the father when they, still they are not married, they are happy.

Those who are under the domination of the husband after being married, they’re happy. And those who are under the domination of elderly children, they are happy. So this statement of Manu-saṁhitā... Just like children should not be given freedom, similarly, woman should not be given freedom. They should be given all protection. That is our Vedic culture.

- Lecture — December 8, 1972, Ahmedabad

In the above lecture, we find that although Śrīla Prabhupāda was very sensitive to the sentiments of the audience present at that venue, he nonetheless, presented the value of Vedic culture and the elevated position of women of India, at present and during Vedic times, by being chaste and subservient to their protectors (father, husband, or son) at all times. However, in their attempts at discussing Vedic culture the author(s) have failed on the following accounts:

- To present the glorious aspects of Vedic culture.
- To present Śrīla Prabhupāda as the glorious ambassador of Vedic culture.

- To properly present the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda that glorified Vedic culture as it is.

Instead, the author(s), in the 292 pages of their book, have only undertaken the ignoble disservice of bashing Lord Kṛṣṇa's Vedic culture.

### **Śrīla Prabhupāda giving Brahma-gāyatrī to women**

As we stated at the beginning of this refutation, the author(s) have presented arguments, spread over several sections and pages, on topics such as equal rights for women and feminism. The arguments supporting feminism start on page 168 of the book in contention, wherein the author(s) respond to a critique of the SAC FDG paper, as cited below:

If Śrīla Prabhupāda were such an easy prey to female persuasion; if he was so accommodating to mundane cravings for equality; why didn't he allow women to wear the sacred thread or to take sannyāsa? Why didn't he change his books to satisfy the feminists? Why did he "compromise" only in the case of the Brahmagāyatrī? This concept of a "compromising Śrīla Prabhupāda" appears speculative, conjectural. We can't claim to understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's inner motives and considerations but we can read what he wrote and the transcriptions of what he said. [p 169]

A Vedabase search yields some interesting interviews (video recordings) of some senior devotees and female disciples, the first ones to receive second initiation, who narrated the events and background leading to their getting second initiation. Transcripts of some of these interviews cited below are themselves self explanatory to prove that Śrīla Prabhupāda was compelled to give Gāyatrī mantras to women disciples:

The next morning Prabhupāda held a second brāhmaṇa initiation ceremony. This was for the women, after they had made a feminist protest about being excluded. Soon after that groups of devotees came from both New York and Montreal to also receive second initiation. Thus on several occasions we got to hear Śrīla Prabhupāda lecture about the meaning brāhmaṇa and the

authenticity of his awarding this status to those born in the West.  
 - Living with the Scriptures, Gītā-nagarī Press - Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswāmī, LS 9: The Boston Brāhmaṇas

**Jadurani:** I didn't know that I wasn't getting the second initiation so I was in the temple. But Govinda dasi, one of Prabhupāda's personal servants, wasn't there because she knew she wasn't going to get second initiation, and she felt bad. She came late. The fire sacrifice was taking place near the front door, and when she came in Prabhupāda looked up and said, "Oh, I was just thinking, 'Where is the girl?' and Krishna has sent you." Then the landlady stormed in drunk and saw all the smoke and the fire. She said, "Goddamn this house," slammed the door closed, and left. Prabhupāda looked up innocently and said, "What did she say, 'this is the house of God?'" The next morning we joined Prabhupāda for his morning walk, and he said to the devotees who received their second initiation, "Now don't be a brahman in name only." Govinda dasi and I, and Annapurna, who had joined us from London, felt miserable and horrible. I thought, "We're not supposed to be on the bodily platform around here." But I didn't say anything. In fact, I was miserable because I was foolish enough to forget that I could have asked Prabhupāda about it after the initiation. Instead I chose to feel bad. The next night, Prabhupāda had second initiation just for the three girls, Govinda dasi, Annapurna, and I, although in subsequent second initiations, the girls and boys were initiated together. Most of his lecture that night was about how all women should be married. "When I was a householder," he said, "my friend had a daughter who he wanted to marry but the girl said, 'I am not going to be the slave of any man.'" Prabhupāda said to her, "Marriage is not slavery for the woman, it is grand protection." Then he said, "There is no necessity of the brahman's thread for a woman because she has to follow her husband. If her husband is a brahman then she automatically becomes a brahman by following his vows. And if her husband is not a brahman, what is the use of her becoming a brahman?" - 22. Biographies and Glorification of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīla Prabhupāda – Remembrances [Siddhānta dāsa, ITV], Chapter 20  
 Jadurani, Giriraj Swami & Bhakti Caru Swami

**Govinda dasi:** In Boston Gaurasundar was constantly asking about the gayatri mantra. Śrīla Prabhupāda was actually not that keen on giving the gayatri mantra. He didn't think it was that important. He was more interested in our learning to chant Hare Krishna and follow the principles. Gaurasundar was very scholarly as was Pradyumna and a few others, so he decided to give them the gayatri mantra. I met Gaurasundar on the street and he was excited to the point that he shaved off all his hair for the second initiation. I was surprised but disappointed that Prabhupāda was not going to give it to the women as well. I felt a little left out. He did, however, have a separate ceremony for the ladies the following evening. But at the time when the men were getting their gayatri mantra, I did feel a little left out. When everyone got ready to go to the temple for the fire sacrifice, I decided I'd stay home. Maybe I might have been sulking as it was my nature at that time to sometimes sulk. I'm embarrassed. I don't know how to put it any other way. I was young. They went off to the temple and I sat at home and sulked for a few minutes and then I said to myself, "What am I doing? This is ridiculous. I'm missing out on hearing Prabhupāda speak." I loved to hear him speak. I could listen to him speak for hours at a time. I could be completely disconnected from the material existence while Śrīla Prabhupāda was speaking. I was completely focused and it was completely blissful. You got the experience of sat-chit-ananda, eternity, bliss, and knowledge during that time. So then I thought, "I'm missing out on something I love just because of my stupid mind." I went running down the street and ran all the way to the temple, which was quite a long way, perhaps eight or nine blocks. I came bursting in the door and bowed down, and Swamiji at that time said, "Ah! I was just thinking where is that girl? And now Krishna has sent." He said, "I was wondering how you could stay away. You love to hear me speak so much." So I swallowed my stupid pride and enjoyed the ceremony. The next evening he gave the women a similar ceremony with the gayatri initiation, which seems to have taken on a huge importance these days but at the time it wasn't much of a concern to Prabhupāda.

>>> Ref. VedaBase =>22. Biographies and Glorification of Śrīla

Prabhupāda, Śrīla Prabhupāda – Remembrances [Siddhānta dāsa, ITV], Chapter 60 Govinda, Mahapurana, Drumila, Kalpalatika, Kriyashakti, Jivananda, Tattvavit, Banabhatta, Guru-Gauranga

**Pradyumna das:** During that Boston trip, almost every week new faces used to show up from New York. All the New York devotees would come up – Brāhmaṇanda, Rayarama, Rupanuga. The Boston temple had always been a small temple – three people, two people, five people, six people but never more than about five or six; but during Prabhupāda's visit there, it was just packed with mostly New York devotees. I remember the day after the brāhmaṇa initiation we all went on a walk, I was also there, and I quipped, "Boston brahmins." Prabhupāda said, "Ah, yes, Boston brahmins." There were six of us that got sacred thread in the first initiation, six men and no women. Then they raised a fuss and they didn't show up. They were so angry that they weren't going to get second initiation, they didn't come.

**Govinda dasi:** Goursundar really wanted this Gayatri mantra, so he talked to Prabhupāda about it. He was reading all kinds of things. So Prabhupāda agreed to give him Gayatri mantra and give him second initiation. So I met him on the street and he had his hair all shaved off that really bothered me. But that night he had the Gayatri mantra initiation, and I was upset because he was going to give Goursundar a mantra but he wasn't going to give it to me. So I felt very left out. So when it came time to go for the initiation ceremony, I said, "Well, I'm not feeling very well so I'm not going to go." I was pouting. And then after they left, I thought to myself, "What am I doing? I don't want to be not there!" So I ran out the door and ran the 10 blocks all the way to the temple and burst into the temple, and Prabhupāda was sitting there giving the initiation and he looked up and he said, "Ah, Govinda dasi, I was wondering how you could stay away. You love to hear me speak so much." Because he wanted me to come but I was mad. I was very upset about this. And so because I was a little upset, he decided that the girls also should have Gayatri mantra. Jadurani was more upset. And so he gave us initiation the next evening with the Gayatri mantra because he knew that in this country the girls and the boys are educated in the same

way. [Following Śrīla Prabhupāda – Remembrances, ISKCON Cinema, All Rights Reserved ©2003 – 2017, Courtesy Yadubara Dāsa: DVD or: November 1965 – July 1970, May 1968: BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS –Airport departure from New York City to Boston]

**Balai:** To my understanding, Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't want to give girls gayatri mantra. In India at that time girls didn't receive gayatri mantra. But one very outspoken woman, Madhava Lati dasi, insisted that the women, especially her, be given gayatri mantra. Śrīla Prabhupāda, being a pure devotee, could make an adjustment to previous customs according to time and circumstance. Thus, he gave all the women gayatri mantra. That adjustment was necessary because so many women did and still do pujari work. - 22. Biographies and Glorification of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīla Prabhupāda – Remembrances [Siddhānta dāsa, ITV], Chapter 48, Balai

### **Ācāryas vs. system – misguided philosophy revealed**

On pages 48 through 56 of their book, the author(s)' claim that feminism is not the cause for the call for institutionalizing the FDG system in ISKCON, which we have already refuted in one of the previous sections. Nonetheless, there are a few more concerns that we will present in this section here that are relevant to exposing the author(s)' attempt to create cultural confusion in the minds of its readers. Here is an excerpt from page 52 of the book under discussion:

The third way to address this argument (“The idea of women dīkṣā-guru comes from Western feminism”) is by stressing that it’s the practice of the ācāryas – and especially of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who preached worldwide – to consider the local current cultural attitudes in their presentation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Lord Caitanya Himself and all the subsequent ācāryas both innovated and blended it with their culture. They did not merely fit it, and they did not merely innovate. There was balance. This naturally requires great wisdom and a keen discrimination between what constitutes a principle and what constitutes a detail: [p 52]

In this passage, the author(s) boldly state without giving any evidence that Lord Caitanya Himself and all the subsequent ācāryas including Śrila Prabhupāda innovated and made adjustments to the local current cultural attitudes and context. However, let us examine the purport to Cc Ādi 7.48, as cited below (emphasis ours):

In the *paramparā* system, the instructions taken from the bonafide spiritual master must also be based on revealed Vedic scriptures. One who is in the line of disciplic succession cannot manufacture his own way of behavior. There are many so-called followers of the Vaiṣṇava cult in the line of Caitanya Mahāprabhu who do not scrupulously follow the conclusions of the *sāstras*, and therefore they are considered to be *apa-sampradāya*, which means “outside of the sampradāya.” Some of these groups are known as *āula*, *bāula*, *kartābhajā*, *neḍā*, *daraveśa*, *sāñi*, *sahajiyā*, *sakhībheki*, *smārta*, *jāta-gosāñi*, *ativāḍī*, *cūḍādhārī* and *gaurāṅga-nāgarī*. To follow strictly the disciplic succession of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, one should not associate with these *apasampradāya* communities. ... Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura advises, *sādhu-sāstra-guru-vākyā*, *hṛdaye kariyā aikya*. The meaning of this instruction is that one must consider the instructions of the *sādhu*, the revealed scriptures and the spiritual master to understand the real purpose of spiritual life. **Neither a sādhu (saintly person or Vaiṣṇava) nor a bonafide spiritual master says anything that is beyond the scope of the sanction of the revealed scriptures.** Thus the statements of the revealed scriptures correspond to those of the bonafide spiritual master and saintly persons. One must therefore act with reference to these three important sources of understanding. [Cc Ādi 7.48 purport]

The above purport excerpt from Cc Ādi 7.48 shows that one who manufactures outside of or against the conclusions of *sāstra* will be considered an *apa-sampradāya*. Hence, the author(s) are only propagating their misunderstanding of the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Let us continue examining the author(s) statements from their book on page 52 wherein they further quote the

purport of Cc *Ādi* 7.31-32 to substantiate their claim that an ācārya is empowered to make changes based on local customs and cultures, and hence they make outlandish claims that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to give independence to women and make them initiating spiritual masters.

The proper understanding is that Śrīla Prabhupāda had to trick his followers in order to give them entry into Krishna consciousness and devotee association and then later teach them all the rules and regulations from the *śāstra* which includes telling them that men and women are not equal and thus do not have equal duties; their duties differ. The purport to Cc. *Ādi* 7.31-32 harmonizes this understanding, where Śrīla Prabhupāda justifies his engaging boys and girls equally in preaching by saying that “one cannot suddenly change a community’s social customs.” He did not say that one should not change a community’s social customs but he expressed the impossibility of “suddenly” changing them—but certainly, typical western cultural habits needed to be gradually changed.<sup>72</sup> We should not make the mistake of thinking that Śrīla Prabhupāda was comfortable with western social customs. In fact, on numerous occasions Śrīla Prabhupāda brought up the drawbacks of the western countries’ egalitarian agenda, as is the case in the following purport:

Here is a difference between male and female that exists even in the higher statuses of life — in fact, even between Lord Śiva and his wife. Lord Śiva could understand Citraketu very nicely but Pārvatī could not. Thus even in the higher statuses of life there is a difference between the understanding of a male and that of a female. It may be said that the understanding of a woman is always inferior to the understanding of a man. In the Western countries there is now agitation to the effect that man and woman should be considered equal but from this verse, it appears that woman is always less intelligent than man. - Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport to SB 6.17.34-35

72 See Cc. *Ādi* 7.37 purport.

Certainly, we cannot brush aside the above purport by stating that whenever Śrīla Prabhupāda referred to woman not being equal to men it was only applicable to non-devotee or ordinary women since, in this context, Śrīla Prabhupāda is referring to mother Pārvatī, who is obviously a pure devotee. Can ISKCON women claim to be more exalted than mother Pārvatī and therefore beyond all consideration of male or female? Thus, we have to follow the directions given by our Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda, understand and align *guru-vākyas* and *sādhu-vākyas* with *śāstra-vākyas* and understand *śāstra-vākyas* in light of the *paramparā-ācārya*'s commentaries or explanations. Let us consider another lecture Śrīla Prabhupāda gave on the role of a Kṛṣṇa conscious man and woman:

Woman, they are generally equipped with the qualities of passion and ignorance. And man also may be but man can be elevated to the platform of goodness. Woman cannot be. Woman cannot be. Therefore if the husband is nice and the woman follows—woman becomes faithful and chaste to the husband—then their both life becomes successful. There are three qualities of nature: sattva, raja, tama. So rajas-tama, generally that is the quality of woman. And man can become to the platform of goodness. Therefore initiation, brahminical symbolic representation, is given to the man, not to the woman. This is the theory.

Therefore the combination should be that the husband should be first-class devotee, Kṛṣṇa conscious, and woman should be..., woman should be devoted to the husband, faithful, so that she would help the husband to make progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Then their both life is successful. Otherwise, if the husband simply becomes captivated by the charming beauty of woman and engages himself in the sex life, then his life is lost, and the woman, they are less intelligent that unless they are guided by proper husband, her life is also lost – [lecture SB 1.3.17—September 22, 1972, Los Angeles]

This also explains why Śrīla Prabhupāda never implemented women spiritual masters himself and did not even name one

women among the eleven *rtvik* representatives, because it is directly against the injunction of *śāstra* and has never been done by previous *ācāryas*. Besides this, he did not make a single woman Temple President, or GBC or appoint them to any responsible post. This is because that would be directly against the *śāstra* injunctions. *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* (11.708) says that “one should never appoint a woman on any post.” Tamal Krishna Maharaj recalls that Śrīla Prabhupāda once told him that Yamuna devi dasi was very elevated, almost on the level of *bhāva*, and that “if she weren’t a woman, I would make her a GBC.”<sup>73</sup> Again, Śrīla Prabhupāda, as an *ācārya*, did not deviate from the *śāstra*.

### Is spiritual equality the same as material feminism?

In an attempt to establish their point regarding feminism and equal rights for women, the author(s) on pages 245–46 of their book (cited below), quote out of context *Bhagavad-gītā* 9.32, *mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya ye 'pi syuḥ pāpa-yonayah striyo vaiśyās tathā śūdrās te 'pi yānti parām gatim* that states that those who take shelter in Lord Kṛṣṇa, though they are of lower birth – women, *vaiśyas* [merchants] and *śūdras* [workers] – can attain the supreme destination:

As Śrīla Prabhupāda said in a lecture:[35]

Striya means woman. So there is no restriction for going back to home, back to Godhead, for anyone, and what to speak of man, woman, anyone. If he wants to go back, there is no restriction. Te 'pi yānti parām gatim. Mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya ye 'pi syuḥ pāpa-yonayah [Bg. 9.32]. This is the difference. For God there is no discrimination. Women, men have equal rights to become godly and back to home, back to Godhead.

[35] Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.5.2, Johannesburg, 22 October 1975

73 <https://tinyurl.com/367td3d6>

We should reject the counter-productive, unenlightened and debasing feminism of the lower modes of passion and ignorance; but we should embrace the soul centered equality Śrīla Prabhupāda promoted [p 245–46]

This verse speaks about pure devotional service and becoming a devotee of the Lord, not granting equal rights for women or feminism. As it is evident from the above lecture, it is clear that Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.32) in order to show that there is no disqualification, in terms of bodily designation, for rendering pure devotional service, becoming godly and returning back home, back to Godhead. This is consistent with all other purports in which Śrīla Prabhupāda had cited this verse and explained the context. But the author(s) conveniently extract the bhakti-centered equality part of the verse from *Bhagavad-gītā* 9.32 and stitch it together with their propaganda that women have equal right to become *dīkṣā-gurus*. The excerpt shown above is only one of the many misuses of *Bhagavad-gītā* 9.32 (and its purport) spread across the pages of the book under discussion.

On pages 103 and 104 of their book, the author(s) extracted a couple of sentences out of context from Śrīla Prabhupāda's personal correspondence addressed to Silavati devī dāsi and linked it with Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport to the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.32) to establish their own false narrative that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted his female disciples to become *dīkṣā-gurus*, as shown below:

In spiritual matters superiority and inferiority depend on the level of Kṛṣṇa consciousness of the individual and not on bodily, external considerations. Śrīla Prabhupāda for instance explained that although the husband should generally provide guidance to the wife, if the wife is more advanced and induces the husband to take up devotional service, the husband should acknowledge her as his spiritual guide:

The actual system is that the husband is Spiritual Master to his wife, but if the wife can bring her husband into practicing this process, then it is all right that the husband accepts wife as Spiritual Master. – Letter to Silavati, 14 June 1969

In any case, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained in the Bhagavad-gītā (9.32. purport):

[I]n devotional service there is no distinction between the lower and higher classes of people. In the material conception of life there are such divisions, but for a person engaged in transcendental devotional service to the Lord there are not.

Let us consider the actual correspondence to mother Silavati along with its surrounding context, as shown below (emphasis ours):

Your description of the course you are giving to the interested girls about the role they play in Krishna Consciousness is very nice, and I am pleased that you have begun this project. Actually the role of all conditioned souls is the same; to chant Hare Krishna, tell others to chant, perfect our lives in Krishna Consciousness, and to go back to Godhead when this body is finished. Now if you can induce all the women of Los Angeles to place an altar in their homes and help their husbands have peaceful, happy home life in Krishna Consciousness, that will be very great service for you. The actual system is that the husband is Spiritual Master to his wife, but if the wife can bring her husband into practicing this process, then it is all right that the husband accepts wife as Spiritual Master. Caitanya Mahaprabhu has said that anyone who knows the science of Krishna, that person should be accepted as Spiritual Master, regardless of any material so-called qualifications; such as rich or poor, man or woman, or brahmana or sudra. So if you can show the women of the community how to help their husbands and children to perfect their home life, and all aspects of life, in Krishna Consciousness by chanting, aratrik ceremonies, and eating Krishna prasadam, then you will improve

the conditions of the neighboring communities to an incalculable extent. So try for this as far as possible.

It is clear that Śrīla Prabhupāda never meant for Silavati mātā to become a *dikṣā-guru* or initiating spiritual master. He was mainly encouraging Silavati mātā to preach to potential devotee women to help their husbands and children to perfect their home life through all aspects of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. The author(s) unduly extracted a portion from Śrīla Prabhupāda's personal correspondence to mother Silavati and connected it with the purport to *Bhagavad-gītā* 9.32, in their disparate attempt to propagate their false narrative of institutionalizing FDG within ISKCON. The author(s)' assertion that we should mix feminism with the soul-centered equality that Śrīla Prabhupāda promoted is a misunderstanding of his teachings in total. Let us consider another exhibit from pages 249 and 250 of the book in contention, concerning the misuse of Śrīla Prabhupāda's statement that "the rights are the same" to justify the cause for feminism.

As far as the role of women in ISKCON, in an interview in Toronto, on 18 June 1976, Śrīla Prabhupāda said that "the rights are the same" (which is the very essence of feminism) – [p 249]

The above statement made by the author(s) on page 249 is not the actual transcript of the 18 June 1976 interview, an excerpt of which is presented below (emphasis ours):

**Mrs. O'Connell:** Swamiji, would you say something about the place of women in your movement?

**Prabhupāda:** There is no distinction between man and woman. That is said in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya ye 'pi syuḥ pāpā-yonayah striyo sūdrās tathā vaiśyāḥ [Bg. 9.32]. ... The first is mentioned, striya. Striyāḥ sūdrās tathā vaiśyāḥ. These classes are understood to be less intelligent—woman, sūdra and the vaiśyas. But Kṛṣṇa says, "No, even for them it is open." Because in the spiritual platform there is no such distinction, man,

woman, or black, white, or big or small. No. Everyone is spirit soul. Pañditāḥ sama-darśināḥ [Bg. 5.18]. ...

**Mrs. O'Connell:** The women could become pañditas, then.

**Prabhupāda:** Oh, yes. Te 'pi yānti parāṁ gatim. Not only come, she can also attain perfection. There is no such restriction. Kṛṣṇa said.

**Mrs. O'Connell:** Do you have any pañditas in the Western movement, women?

**Prabhupāda:** There are so many Western woman, girls, in our society. They are chanting, dancing, taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Many. Of course because superficially, bodily, there is some distinction, so we keep women separately from men, that's all. Otherwise, the rights are the same.

**Prof. O'Connell:** Is it possible, Swamiji, for a woman to be a guru in the line of disciplic succession?

**Prabhupāda:** Yes. Jāhnavā-devī was—Nityānanda's wife. She became. If she is able to go to the highest perfection of life, why it is not possible to become guru? But, not so many. Actually one who has attained the perfection, she can become guru. But man or woman, unless one has attained the perfection... Yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā sei guru haya [Cc. *Madhya* 8.128].

[Whether one is a brāhmaṇa, a sannyāsī or a śūdra—regardless of what he is—he can become a spiritual master if he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa.]

The qualification of guru is that he must be fully cognizant of the science of Kṛṣṇa. Then he or she can become guru. Yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei guru haya. [break] In our material world, is it any prohibition that woman cannot become professor? If she is qualified, she can become professor. What is the wrong there? She must be qualified. That is the position. So similarly, if the woman understands Kṛṣṇa consciousness perfectly, she can become guru. [Interview with Professors O'Connell, Motilal, and Shivarām—June 18, 1976, Toronto]

The above conversation is the most frequently quoted statement of Śrīla Prabhupāda that the pro-FDGs claim represents “the desire” of the Founder-Ācārya. Let us go over that segment of conversation in full to show that whatever Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke about equality is in terms of the right to practice pure devotional service and certainly not in terms of equality on a material platform, as the author(s) seem to have misunderstood:

\* Mrs. O’Connell starts the conversation by asking about the position of women within ISKCON in a general context. Śrīla Prabhupāda answers that both man and woman have equal right as souls to surrender to the Lord and attain the supreme destination. Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted Bhagavad-gītā 9.32 and 5.18 to substantiate his statements that there is no difference between a man, woman, or animal in a spiritual context but on a material platform there are differences.

\* Mrs. O’Connell then raises the question of whether the women of ISKCON, especially of western origin, can become pāṇḍitas or scholars. To answer this question, Śrīla Prabhupāda says that the western women and girls of ISKCON are also engaged in chanting, dancing, and practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and hence in that context Śrīla Prabhupāda says they have equal rights. Here Śrīla Prabhupāda is stating that men and women have equal rights to receive knowledge and learn as a student or become disciples. We should note that these are the exact injunctions mentioned in the Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-samhitā (1.14, 1.15)

\* At last Prof. O’Connell asks the specific question of whether a woman can become a guru in the line of disciplic succession, for which Śrīla Prabhupāda did not say yes based on “soul-centered equality,” but he only paraphrased the verses from revealed scriptures such as the Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-samhitā (1.44).<sup>74</sup>

74 See introductory sections for actual *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-samhitā* verses and their translations.

In Bg 7.3 Lord Kṛṣṇa says that to understand Him or the science about Him (*māṁ vetti tattvataḥ*) is very difficult (*manuṣyānāṁ sahasreṣu kaścid*). In his purport to this verse Śrīla Prabhupāda states that Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī writes in his *Bhakti-rasāṁṛta-sindhu* (1.2.101): *śruti-smṛti-purāṇādi-pāñcarātra-vidhim vinā aikāntikī harer bhaktir utpātāyaiva kalpate*, “Devotional service of the Lord that ignores the authorized Vedic literature like the *Upaniṣads*, *Purāṇas*, and *Nārada-pāñcarātra* is simply an unnecessary disturbance in society.” Śrīla Prabhupāda further states, “Only the pure devotees can know something of the inconceivable transcendental qualities in Kṛṣṇa – His being the cause of all causes, His omnipotence and opulence, and His wealth, fame, strength, beauty, knowledge and renunciation – because Kṛṣṇa is benevolently inclined to His devotees.”

Hence, in this interview Śrīla Prabhupāda gave the example of Jāhnavā-devī who indeed qualifies for knowing the science of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*pratyakṣitātma-nāthā*) and that there are not so many devotees who are at the level of Jāhnavā-devī. We have already explained the same concept expressed in the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* (1.44), that only one who is a *pratyakṣitātma-nāthā* (fully self-realized persons who can see the Lord face-to-face) is qualified to become a *dīkṣā-guru* irrespective of caste and gender.

## Do the ends justify the means?

A common idea in modern demoniac society is the belief that the ends justify the means. This means that any actions people take are justified regardless of how they go about achieving their desired result, if they deem the end result to be important enough. For example, a person might justify lying on their resume because it could help them get a job. On page 235 of the book in question, the author(s) justify citing research and studies done regarding Vedic culture from mundane and highly questionable sources in an attempt to legitimize their feminist equality narrative:

Nonetheless we might wish to analyze such reaction a bit more closely, especially upon discovering that there are other cases in India – outside the Aryasamaj – of women wearing the *upavīta*. Could the practice be unnecessary without being fundamentally, eternally wrong? Could it be a detail that the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava ācāryas never considered appropriate or necessary introducing but which possesses a substantial tradition going back millennia? Accounts of women wearing the sacred thread in ancient times are quite common in both scholarly writings and internet journalism; below we reproduce a few examples of such statements – [p 235]

Are the author(s) suggesting that for answers regarding whether women wore the *upavīta* or not in the past, we should not trust Vedic tradition as per *śāstric* injunctions such as that given in the *Āpastamba Dharma-sūtra* (1.1.1.2 and 3),<sup>75</sup> but should simply trust their conclusions that they derived based on mundane internet journalism? One may wonder where the author(s) are leading their readers with such narratives originating from secular and feminist modern scholarship. In the name of presenting a balanced view, they only end up implying that Śrīla Prabhupāda would support their position of what may be termed as “spiritual feminism.”

Is it wise to believe that some forms of equality should be reserved only for extraordinarily advanced Vaiṣṇavīs? Certainly Śrīla Prabhupāda did not favor materialistic feminism and therefore he cannot be considered a feminist; but he did express the equality of all living entities on the spiritual platform, and he spoke about equality of the sexes amongst those performing devotional service. So the question is: How should we distinguish when the sense of equality among the genders comes from the “puffed-up concept of womanly life,” [33] which is questionable, and when it comes from “equal vision,” [34] which is commendable? – [p 244]

In the above paragraph, the author(s) state that Śrīla Prabhupāda

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75 *dharmajña samayah pramānam/vedāśca*: “The knowers of the law are authorities for us and the Vedas alone are their authority. The Vedas are therefore the root authority in matters of dharma and *adharma*.”

spoke in support of equality of the sexes amongst those performing devotional service. This way they try to put words in Śrīla Prabhupāda's mouth. We have already cited the following conversations in which Śrīla Prabhupāda stated his expectations of women devotees. We will consider some of them here once again, as cited below:

Yogesvara: So here's a problem: The women today want the same rights as men. How can they be satisfied?

Prabhupāda: Everything will be satisfied. Just like our women, Kṛṣṇa conscious, they are working. They don't want equal rights with the men. It is due to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They are cleansing the temple, they are cooking very nicely. They are satisfied. They never said that "I have to go to Japan for preaching like Prabhupāda." They never say. This is artificial. So Kṛṣṇa consciousness means work in his constitutional position. The women, men, when they remain in their constitutional position, there will be no artificial

[Morning Walk – May 27, 1974, Rome]

In the above conversation, Śrīla Prabhupāda clearly states that the women of the ISKCON movement are quite happy and content remaining in their constitutional position. Here is a transcript of another conversation where Śrīla Prabhupāda makes a similar point regarding his female disciples:

Reporter: Are men superior in your movement, though?

Prabhupāda: Hm?

Reporter: Are men regarded as superior to women?

Prabhupāda: Yes, naturally. Naturally, woman requires protection by the man. In the childhood she is protected by the father, and youth time she is protected by the husband, and old age she is protected by elderly sons. That is natural. [March 5th, 1975 - Room Conversation - New York City]

The question, asked by the reporter, “Are **men superior** in **your movement?**” indicates that the reporter was referring to men and women of ISKCON or *vaiṣṇavas* and *vaiṣṇavīs*, and not ordinary men and women. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains the idea of roles for *vaiṣṇavas* and *vaiṣṇavīs* of ISKCON, much akin to and in harmony with Vedic culture. Śrīla Prabhupāda cited the Vedic paradigm and immutable position of women as equally applicable to devotee women as well as non-devotee women and that they cannot overstep the Vedic paradigm of protection in the name of spiritual equality.

In another lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.3.18–19, we find Śrīla Prabhupāda explaining the role of ladies in the *varṇāśrama* system.

So who is going to mop these two rooms? The ladies should. Yes. It is the ladies' business. Ladies' business. First after this, cleansing of the [indistinct]. Then get some flowers, change dress. This is the procedure. And then offer breakfast. In this way. Very good. [end]

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.3.18–19 at Śrī Kṛṣṇa-niketana — February 12, 1971, Gorakhpur

At the same time from another conversation between Śrīla Prabhupāda and his disciples, we find Śrīla Prabhupāda quipping about the nominal independence and equal rights of the ladies in the USA and other western countries:

The man and woman in your country, they have got equal rights. Why not here, [laughter] in the lavatory? Why this discrimination, “woman,” “man”? Why? Equal rights. Must be equal rights. - Morning Walk—May 4, 1973, Los Angeles

### “Magic ellipses” hijacks Śrīla Prabhupāda’s lecture

In a desperate attempt to drive home a pro-feminist agenda, the author(s), on page 268 of their book, outrageously criticize Vedic India and those who follow the Vedic ideals, as shown below (emphasis ours):

Yes, yes, yes, women can possibly degrade when unsupervised by well-wishing male figures. Yes, they can possibly fall prey to unscrupulous men; but hearing of all the murders and abuse of women by the **degraded descendants of Vedic India we are tempted to shout: “Equal rights for women ki jaya! Feminism ki jaya! Social and legal equality between genders ki jaya!”** At least in those countries that truly give equal rights to women (even if for mundane reasons) we don’t see so many crimes against the female population. Thirty-six years ago, in a private exchange, Śrīla Prabhupāda called Westerners “white aborigines”<sup>53</sup> Would he perhaps recognize that, with all the rampant mistreatment of Indian women, today those “white aborigines” could teach Indian men one or two things about women’s protection? India still retains remarkable symptoms of true culture and civilization, but alongside those venerable remains, thrives a fathomless darkness.<sup>[54]</sup> [54]: We wonder: We witness that certain devotees invest extraordinary amounts of time and energy relentlessly trying to block a few elderly ISKCON ladies from becoming dīkṣā-guru (for their protection, of course). Wouldn’t that energy (or part of it) be better spent to promote a more Kṛṣṇa conscious treatment of women in general? If their motivation is to promote the Vedic ideals of women’s protection, shouldn’t they give at least some attention to the widespread abuse and murder of women in Indian society? – [page 268]

In the above excerpt from their book, the author(s) seem to intentionally want to deride Vedic Indian culture by exaggerating the negative aspects of modern Indian culture and thereby expressing their overall resentment of Vedic ideals, especially in regards to women’s protection. In order to establish their false narratives they state that the Vedic ideals of women’s dependence is not necessary. The author(s) on page 269 of their book, quote a portion of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.8.51, in which they removed all the pieces of that lecture that goes against their propaganda, as shown below (emphasis and or strike-thru insertion are ours):

So children, brāhmaṇa, and here it is said strī, woman. According to Vedic politics, the children and brāhmaṇa, old men and women, they have no-fault. They are out of all laws of the state. Their fault will never be taken as seriously. They are innocent. They require protection. Now the agitation is that woman should have equal rights with man. So that is not Vedic idea. Vedic idea is that woman should be always protected. She is not independent. Just like child. All these children, their mother is always attentive. Child is going here; he [she] is taking care.

So that dependence is required. If the child says, "I am independent," that is not for his profit. The child must be taken care of. That is good. Similarly, woman also. Just like old man like us, I am always taken care of. Similarly, a brāhmaṇa also should be taken care of, first consideration. First protection, brāhmaṇa, saintly person. That is civilization. That is human society. Not that the children, women and the brāhmaṇas should be treated like cats and dogs. No. That is not civilization.

So Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhīra is very much repentant: "I have killed so many men, and they are, some of them are father, some of them are brother, some of them are sons, some of them are husbands of the women. And because I have killed them, now this woman class, they have become friendless." ~~So he is...~~ Just see how much he is aggrieved, thinking of the condition of the woman. ~~And people accuse that India, woman are considered just like slaves.~~ Just see. The king is thinking of woman so seriously, and is it a fact that in India woman is taken as slaves? Who cares for the slaves, so much anxiety? And that is king. Yes. A king shall give protection to everyone, especially those who are helpless.

So woman is protected in childhood by the father, and when she is grown-up girl, youth, although the father is ready to give her protection in every respect but she has developed by that time sex desires. Under the circumstances, it is the duty of the father to hand over the girl to a nice young boy to take her protection. This is marriage. Kanyā-dāna. According to Vedic system, kanyā, means daughter, is given in charity. ... [several paragraphs skipped]

by the author(s)]

~~So without king...~~ Not like the present government officers, all rogues and simply take taxes and let the citizens go to hell. There is no protection for anyone, either for the children, either for the brāhmaṇas or for the women. ~~No protection. "You go to hell. If you like, we can give you some contribution. That's all."~~ No. The king must be so responsible that he should see to the comfort of the citizens, especially the brāhmaṇas, the children and the women – [lecture - *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.8.51—May 13, 1973, Los Angeles]

The author(s), on page 269 of the book in contention, perform a “lexical slaughter” of the original lecture and stitch various pieces of the text with their favorite “magic ellipses,” to make it appear to be a nice and contiguous flowing text. This way the author(s) attempt to establish that Śrīla Prabhupāda was indeed not in favor of implementing the Vedic culture of bygone times of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhīra and that Vedic Indians mainly practiced woman slavery. The strike-thru text in the above exhibit shows that Śrīla Prabhupāda did not consider the protection of women to be equivalent to slavery. The author(s) chose to remove those texts from the original transcript because they want to influence the readers with their narrative which is different from the original purpose and intended meaning of this section of the lecture. Many lines and statements (as emphasized above) that are against the narrative that the author(s) wanted to present are replaced by their favorite “magic ellipses.” In this lecture, Śrīla Prabhupāda glorifies India for offering protection to women and condemns the western egalitarian feminists’ unfair propaganda that Vedic India and Vedic men are barbaric “slave keepers.” The author(s) successfully hijacked the lecture using their “magic ellipses” in order to push their narrative in the 50 pages of blasphemy of Vedic India and Vedic men at the end of their book.

Let us consider another such hijacking of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words. This time the author(s) deploy their “magic ellipses” on

the purport to Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya-līlā*, 23.105, as cited below (emphasis, underline, and highlighting are ours):

In the same Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Śrīla Prabhupāda also wrote:

To broadcast the cult of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one has to learn the possibility of renunciation in terms of country, time and candidate. . . The teacher (ācārya) has to consider time, candidate and country. He must avoid the principle of niyamāgraha—that is, he should not try to perform the impossible. What is possible in one country may not be possible in another. The ācārya's duty is to accept the essence of devotional service. . . Sanātana Gosvāmī wrote his Vaiṣṇava smṛti, Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, which was specifically meant for India. In those days, India was more or less following the principle of smārta-vidhi. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī had to keep pace with this, and his Hari-bhakti-vilāsa was compiled with this in mind . . . What is required is a special technique according to country, time and candidate. Without the sanction of the spiritual master, we should not try to imitate. . . We should not introduce anything whimsically, without the sanction of the bonafide spiritual master. – Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya-līlā*, 23.105, purport

In the passage cited on page 53 of their book, the author(s) quote from the Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya*, 23.105, purport, and comment that this purport is a direct instruction from Śrīla Prabhupāda that correlates to a Śrī Vyāsapujā Lecture (London, August 22, 1973) in which Śrīla Prabhupāda said that he wants all of his dear sons and daughters to become spiritual masters. It has already been established that the Śrī Vyāsapujā Lecture (London, August 22, 1973) was severely distorted in order to create the impression that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted anyone and everyone to become a “*dīkṣā-guru*.<sup>76</sup>

However, when we restore the text masked off by the “magic ellipses” (emphasized, underlined, and highlighted) we find that the context of the purport of Cc *Madhya* 23.105 is that

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76 See section “Avoiding direct meanings – *Māyāvāda* exposed” for details

Śrīla Prabhupāda is cautioning against the *smārta* processes of *varṇāśrama* by birth or hereditary caste and instructs that devotees must follow *gosvāmī* process of *varṇāśrama* based on the *Nārada-pāñcarātra* system, as cited below (emphasis ours):

There is a difference between the *smārta* process and the *gosvāmī* process. According to the *smārta* process, one cannot be accepted as a *brāhmaṇa* unless he is born in a *brāhmaṇa* family. According to the *gosvāmī* process, the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, and the *Nārada-pāñcarātra*, anyone can be a *brāhmaṇa* if he is properly initiated by a bonafide spiritual master. This is also the verdict of Śukadeva Gosvāmī in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.4.18) – [a portion of text from purport to Cc *Madhya* 23.105 that is masked off by “magic ellipses”].

If devotees were to follow Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions in the purport of Cc *Madhya* 23.105, devotees would adopt the *Nārada-pāñcarātra* system, in which verses 1.42, 1.43 prohibit women from becoming *dīkṣā-gurus*. However, the author(s), by deploying their wish-fulfilling “magic ellipses,” hijacked that purport in order to promote their agenda of implementing women *dīkṣā-gurus* at any cost.

## Concluding words

Before concluding, we would like to state that by exposing the author(s)' poor scholarship, dishonesty, diplomacy, and duplicity in this 292-page publication, it is not our intent to merely pinpoint the defects in this book nor to portray everything related to women devotees as imperfect nor to suggest that the male devotees of ISKCON are perfect. We sincerely want to impress upon the ISKCON devotees the need to consider all aspects concerning such issues based on *sāstra* as the center of all.

The Governing Body Commission (GBC) of ISKCON has formally and repeatedly recognized ... (Resolution 425, 2005 and resolution 305, 2009) Notwithstanding, **certain ISKCON devotees** ... concluded that the decision of the GBC is perfectly in line with the teachings of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. This writing conveys their considerations and their conclusions. (Page 24)

The records indicate that not all GBC members voted for the recently passed amendments and the October 2019 resolution, nor were there a two-thirds or four-fifths majority as it was claimed on page 24 of the book under discussion. There are records to show that one of the GBCs who voted in favor of the FDG or WDG Tirupati resolution later voted against it in another resolution passed by the ISKCON India Bureau against FDG (evidence available upon request). So, the author(s) statement that the total majority of ISKCON devotees and the entire gamut of GBC and initiating spiritual masters are in agreement and only a handful of devotees are resisting and revolting is indeed an exaggeration.

On page 22 of their book the author(s) state:

“We know; some devotees won’t like the conclusion of this book; but, at least, we can assure them that we remain open; if

anyone can submit better scriptural evidences, better historical references, better quotes, better reasoning, better arguments, and – therefore – a better conclusion, we are completely open to consider publishing a new book. It's not a challenge; it's an invitation and a promise." (Page 22)

At this time, the open invitation and promise from the author(s) is a moot point, because by aiding the FDG institutionalization through their publication, an irreversible damage has already been done. It is hoped that sincere devotees of rank and file will go through all the refutations presented herein and determine for themselves whether the author(s), as they claim, really presented a better publication with "**better scriptural evidence, better historical references, better quotes, better reasoning, better arguments, and – therefore – a better conclusion.**"



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